

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-09

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R 031050Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2946

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

CONFIDENTIAL BANGKOK 24875

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SREF, CB, THA

SUBJ: CAMBODIANS REQUEST REPATRIATION OF PROMINENT REFUGEES

SUMMARY: CAMBODIANS PURSUE REQUEST FOR THAI TO TURN OVER
TO THEM FOUR REFUGEES INVOLVED IN RESISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING THE JUNE 16-17 DISCUSSIONS IN SISOPHON, CAMBODIAN
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IENG SARY MADE A REQUEST OF THAI
FOREIGN MINISTER PHICHAI RATTAKUN WHICH HAS RECEIVED NO
PUBLICITY BUT REMAINS AN ACTIVE QUESTION BETWEEN THE TWO
SIDES. IENG SARY ASKED THAT THAILAND TURN OVER TO HIS
GOVERNMENT FOUR CAMBODIAN REFUGEES: (A) GENERAL SEK SAM IET,
THE THOROUGHLY CORRUPT FORMER GOVERNOR OF BATTAMBANG; (B)
COLONEL IM CHHOU DETH, DESCRIBED AS THE GENERAL'S RIGHT HAND
MAN, A FORMER INTELLIGENCE OFFICER WHO HAS ALLEGEDLY BEEN
INVOLVED IN HIS BOSS' NEFARIOUS ACTIVITIES FOR YEARS; (C)
DAN HSANG, ONETIME GKR MINISTER OF JUSTICE; AND (D) COLONEL
KETH RETH, FORMER DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE BATTAMBANG MILITARY
SUBDIVISION. OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THAT PHICHAI, AT THE TIME,
TRIED TO GIVE A VAGUE ANSWER THAT HE THOUGHT SOME WERE ALREADY
IN FRANCE AND THAT RTG WOULD SEARCH FOR THE OTHERS.

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2. A FRIENDLY JOURNALIST WAS AT INTERIOR MINISTRY SEPTEMBER 2

WHEN VISIT WAS INTERRUPTED BY PHONE CALL FROM ARANYAPRATHET, WHERE CAMBODIAN LIAISON OFFICIALS HAD APPARENTLY RAISED THE SUBJECT AGAIN IN A MEETING WITH THEIR THAI COUNTERPARTS, AND CALLER WAS REQUESTING INSTRUCTIONS. SOURCE DOES NOT KNOW WHAT THE OUTCOME WAS.

3. QUESTION IS UNDOUBTEDLY A DELICATE ONE FOR RTG, WHICH DOES NOT WANT TO BE ACCUSED FOR FORCED REPATRIATION BUT DOES WANT TO BE FRIENDLY WITH CAMBODIA. FACT THAT ALL FOUR MEN HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN RESISTANCE TO COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT TO SOME DEGREE IS ADDITIONAL COMPLICATION. RTG BROUGHT SEK SAM IET TO BANGKOK SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, WHERE HE HAS BEEN LIVING QUIETLY WHILE THAI HAVE SOUGHT UNSUCCESSFULLY TO FIND HIM A NEW COUNTRY OF REFUGE, STRIKING OUT MOST RECENTLY WITH CANADA. WE DO NOT KNOW COLONEL IM CHHOU DETH'S WHEREABOUTS. EMBASSY HAD HEARD THAT DAN HSANG, DRAFTING NEW CONSTITUTIONS AT HIS HOUSE IN ARANYAPRATHET IN ANTICIPATION OF TAKEOVER OF HIS COUNTRY BY THE RESISTANCE, DECIDED SEVERAL WEEKS AGO TO GIVE UP AND GO TO FRANCE. KETH RETH APPEARS TO BE ONE OF THE FEW GOOD CAMBODIANS IN RESISTANCE AND IS LIVING IN ARANYAPRATHET RECOVERING FROM CEREBRAL MALARIA.

4. WE SUSPECT THAI WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO VACILLATE ON THE CAMBODIAN REQUEST. EMBASSY WILL FOLLOW THE QUESTION CLOSELY, HOWEVER, SINCE, IF IT IS GRANTED, ACTION WOULD SET A VERY UNFORTUNATE PRECEDENT.

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